

MEHMET SHEHU

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ON THE EXPERIENCE
OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION WAR
AND THE DEVELOPMENT
OF OUR NATIONAL ARMY

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NOTE

The original title of this material was «Theses on the Experience of the National Liberation War and the Development of our National Army». In the form of a report, it was submitted for the first time by the author to a meeting of the main leading cadres of our Army, organized by the General Staff of the Army on April 18, 1947 in Tirana.

In 1947 when this report was drawn up and delivered, the situation in our Army was characterized by a fierce, though undeclared, struggle between two courses diametrically opposed to one another. On one hand, there was the revisionist course of the Yugoslav «military advisers» serving with our army at that time, and their collaborators, who were trying to impose on our Army the «Yugoslav road» of development based on the «Yugoslav experience», stripped of all the principles and practice of modern military art, of People's War and the practice of our National Liberation War. On the other hand, there was the course, which was in stern opposition

to the former, based on the correct line of our Party, to reject the so-called «Yugoslav military art» and to set our Army on the road to its modernization, relying on the experience of our National Liberation War, the teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and the world revolutionary experience of People's War. Through the Yugoslav «military experts» who served with our Army and their agents in our country headed by traitor Koçi Xoxe, the Yugoslav revisionist leadership did everything to ensure the triumph of the Yugoslav thesis, to have the very valuable experience of our National Liberation War totally ignored, the idea of the mastery of modern military art of people's war rejected, and our Army set wholly and entirely on the «Yugoslav road» of development, with the ultimate purpose of bringing about the incorporation of our People's Army into the Yugoslav Army and of liquidating the freedom of our people.

The healthier section of the Central Committee of our Party, led by Comrade Enver Hoxha, not only were fully aware of the hostile activity, aims and methods of the Yugoslav revisionists and their agents but also opposed them with determination, defended the correct line of the Party, rejected all the revisionist theses on the development of the Army and led the Army ahead on the only correct course, that laid down by the teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism on People's War and the very rich experience of our National Liberation War.

At the outset of 1947, the activity of the Yugos-

lav leadership to subjugate our Army assumed large proportions. In January that year the Yugoslav General Staff organized in Belgrade a major meeting with the participation of all the leading cadres of the Yugoslav Army. Representatives of our People's Army, of the Chief of Staff and the Chief of the Political Office of our Army were also present as guests at that meeting. There, two reports were submitted, one by the General Staff and the other by the Political Office of the Yugoslav Army. The question of the ways of modernization of the Yugoslav Army was the theme of both reports. From top to bottom, both reports were nothing but a collection of profoundly revisionist and Trotskyite theses of a nationalist, chauvinist, reactionary and anti-socialist character, which lauded to the skies the so-called «Yugoslav experience» and «Yugoslav military art», ascribing universal value to them and openly negating the immortal teachings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on the armed uprising and People's War, as well as the revolutionary experience of People's War of our people and the other peoples.

At the conclusion of the meeting a solemn dinner-party was given. The entire Yugoslav leadership were present with Tito at the head, who extolled the proceeding of this meeting, calling it «historic».

The report «Theses on the Experience of the National Liberation War and the Development of our National Army», delivered on April 18th 1947, was a complete refutation of the revisionist theses of the Belgrade meeting organized by the Yugoslav Ge-

neral Staff. That is why in these theses of our General Staff the stress is put on the necessity of a profound study of the very rich experience of our National Liberation War, the immortal teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism on People's War, as well as the revolutionary experience of the People's War of the other peoples. The conclusion of the theses is: **The mastering of Military Art of People's War should be the road of our Army for its development and the guaranteeing of the defence of the Homeland against any danger.**

Almost 30 years have passed by since that day. The conclusion that the development of our Army should go through the mastery of Military Art of People's War, on the basis of the very rich experience of our National Liberation War, of the teachings of our Party, the teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and the experience of People's War of the other peoples has been and is a correct conclusion, it remains entirely valid even to this day, and it will also be valid for the future.

In the experience of People's War of the other peoples we have also included the positive experience of the Soviet Army of the time of Lenin and Stalin, linking it with the concrete conditions of our country's revolutionary practice of People's War. However, as is known, following Stalin's death, the revisionist traitor group of Nikita Khrushchev has usurped power in the party and state of the Soviet Union through putschist methods, has restored capitalism in the Soviet Union, and longsince transfor-

med it from a socialist country into a social-imperialist superpower which poses an extremely serious threat to the freedom of the peoples.

The revisionist and social imperialist leadership of the present-day Soviet Union has rejected Lenin and Stalin's revolutionary military art and turned the Soviet Army into a tool of its policy of aggression against the peoples. The present-day military art of the Soviet Army is a reactionary, social-imperialist, military art. The essence of the revisionist military art of the present-day Soviet Army is the absolutization of the role of the weapon and the underestimation of the role of man in war. The military strategy of the present-day Soviet Union is an imperialist, aggressive, military strategy.

Marxism-Leninism and Military Art of People's War teach us that, with the development of industry and technology, the weapon assumes ever greater importance, but it can never replace man in the field of battle, because the weapon is the **passive** element of war, whereas man is the **active**, conscious element, the **main** element which decides the fate of the battle under any circumstances, developed though military equipment may be.

The report is republished in full (with some small alterations) but it should be taken into consideration that it has been written about 30 years ago. Its material has no claim to perfection, especially when compared with the present revolutionary military thinking of our Army, which has made great advance since that time. The opinions expressed in

this material should be taken as a contribution to discussion and not as results of a detailed analysis or comprehensive military instructions. Nevertheless, they have, on a whole, preserved their original value, nor have they lost their actuality.

From 1947, when this report was delivered, to this day, our People's Army has made great progress in its organization. It has now its Military Art of People's War built by the Party. The basis of our Military Art of People's War is the very rich experience of our National Liberation War led by the Party. In it we find embodied the teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism, of our Party and Comrade Enver Hoxha on the revolutionary armed uprising, People's War, taking also account of the experience of People's War of the other peoples.

Today, all the People's Army, under the leadership of our glorious Party and its founder and General Commander, Comrade Enver Hoxha, has become an unconquerable force of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the hands of the Party. It is educated and trained on the basis of the Marxist-Leninist ideology of our Party of Labour, of our Military Art of People's War, and is in a position to defend the freedom of the people and their socialist achievements with success, even in the most difficult conditions, to face up to and engage the aggressive forces of any enemy in the field of battle, and reap final victory over them.

Mehmet Shehu

Tirana, January 1977.

FOREWORD

Through comrade Mehmet Shehu's booklet **«On the experience of the National Liberation War and the development of our National Army»** our readers will acquaint themselves with a report submitted by comrade Mehmet Shehu to a meeting of the leading cadres of our Army, organized by the General Staff of the Army on April 18, 1947.

This report was drawn up and delivered at a time when an extremely fierce controversy was going on in our Army between two diametrically opposed courses. On the one hand, there was the revisionist course of the Yugoslav «military advisers» serving with our Army at that time and their collaborators who wanted to impose «the Yugoslav way» of development on our Army, and on the other, the course which comrade Mehmet Shehu and the overwhelming majority of our military cadres upheld with great courage, determination and resoluteness and which was based on the correct Marxist-Leninist line of our Party. Our Party fought to have

the so-called «Yugoslav military art» discarded and our Army set on the course of its modernization and development, based on the very rich experience of the National Liberation War, the teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism and the experience of the People's War of the revolutionary peoples of the world.

What the Yugoslav revisionists were after in our Army was to have the positive and very valuable experience of our National Liberation War rejected and our Army liquidated and merged with the Yugoslav Army. This was part of the general scheme of the Yugoslav Titoites to deprive our people of their freedom and independence and turn Albania into the 7th Republic of Yugoslavia.

But as is known, the plans of the Yugoslav revisionists met with disgraceful failure. The healthy section of the Central Committee of the Party, led by Comrade Enver Hoxha, fought with determination and defended with courage the correct Marxist-Leninist line of the Party and rejected all the hostile revisionist theses on the development of our Army and carried it ahead from victory to victory by applying the principles of revolutionary Military Art of People's War.

As a gifted commander and leader of great experience of our National Liberation War, for a time after Liberation, Comrade Mehmet Shehu carried out the functions of the Chief of the General Staff of our Army. With the keenness, determination, courage and precision characterizing him, proceeding

from the teachings of the classics of Marxism-Leninism on the armed uprising and partisan warfare, the decisions and directives of our glorious Party, the teachings of Comrade Enver Hoxha, the rich experience of our National Liberation Army, he sums up the experience of the National Liberation War of our people and Army in a clear and scientifically argued principled manner. He makes a broad generalization of the war experience of our Army both in theory and practice, analyzes in detail the objective and subjective conditions, as well as the ways of its formation, development and further consolidation.

Almost 30 years have gone by since Comrade Mehmet Shehu delivered this report, but its theoretical and practical value is still very great. It gives a splendid picture of the heroic struggle of our people, the heroism of the masses, the valour of our partisan, the correct, consistent and crystal-clear line of our Party, which under the leadership of its Central Committee with Comrade Enver Hoxha at the head, in the concrete conditions of a small country occupied by the enemy, organized the war against the foreign invaders and the local traitors. It set up the Army of our people, united the people in a single National Liberation Front, led them successfully through the war for the liberation of the country and the establishment of the people's power, and today is leading them with wisdom and maturity in their work for the complete construction of the socialist society.

Since then our People's Army, through the tireless work of its cadres and all its personnel, led and educated by the Party, has been raised to a higher level. It has been strengthened and modernized, equipped with modern weapons and means. Our Army has today all the weapons and services, some of which it lacked at that time. But even in the present conditions, the experience described in this booklet is just as valuable as it is actual for the training, the preparation, and further consolidation of the Army in keeping with the requirements of our Military Art of People's War.

The booklet is divided into four parts. In Part One, «The Birth and Development of the National Liberation Army», the author makes a thorough analysis of the situation created as a result of the fascist occupation and the people's war led by the Party against it. In treating the question of the armed uprising and the phases through which it passed, the author points out with the greatest accuracy the characteristics of each phase, the forms and means of organization and war; he gives a scientific argumentation of the line of stepping up the struggle to the complete liberation of the country and the establishment of the peoples' power. Here the reader will find the great truth, which reflects one of the features of our Party as a Marxist-Leninist Party, namely, that when the people have been politically prepared, ready to face up to all the hardships of the war, when the people have been organized and mobilized for the war, then they have stood up

strong and unyielding to any hardship and have emerged triumphant from the struggle against the enemy. Both during the war as well as after Liberation the Party has always told the people the truth. Despite all difficulties and obstacles the Party imbued them with revolutionary patriotism, tempered their consciousness, gave them courage and the determination to fulfil their aspirations.

Part Two, «The Experience of the Partisan (National Liberation) War» is a report of the creative application by our Party and its leadership of the general truth of Marxism-Leninism in the concrete conditions of our country. Convincingly, comrade Mehmet Shehu argues that only an army of the people can defend the people, that a people, however small in number, when they have a leadership loyal to them and are aware of what they are doing, can fight and win over an enemy many times superior in men and means. Summing up the experience of our partisan war, the report lays down the general principles necessary for achieving victory over any enemy or coalition of enemies, principles which are valid in any situation: a revolutionary consciousness, the determination to carry the war through to the end, the principle of the main blow, the spirit of attack, surprise, initiative, continuity of action, etc.

From the National Liberation War, as comrade Mehmet Shehu rightly emphasizes, we learned the basic principles of the revolutionary military art, namely, «that in war there can be no fixed rules and inalterable formula, that war is a complex of factors

and elements whose development and combination make every formula, rule, decision and conception, no matter how clear and well pondered, change according to the changing situation». This is a very valuable lesson for the work of every military man in military training today and in war tomorrow.

In Part Three, in which a «Comparison between a Partisan and a Regular Army» is made, the author analyses the differences between them in organization, composition, armament and tactics, the role played and the place occupied by a regular and a partisan army in war, the possibility and necessity to transform a partisan army into a regular people's army as an indispensable prerequisite for the victory over the enemy, which was successfully realized in our country.

Especially in the conditions of our country, the tactical principles and rules applied by our partisan detachments and studied in detail and on a scientific basis by the author, such as surprise, rapidity (manoeuvring), the spirit of attack, initiative, the proper exploitation of terrain, placing the enemy in difficult terrain (topographic) conditions, as well as a number of other subjective and objective elements, always preserve their validity. Those, as well as the other requirements of People's War were so real as to find a correct reflection and further development in the «The Military Art of People's War in the People's Republic of Albania», according to which are now being trained the People's Army and all the other structures of our armed forces, which guarantee

the territorial integrity of our country, the freedom and sovereignty of our people.

In Part Four, «Some General Reflections on Military Operations in the Conditions of Albania», comrade Mehmet Shehu deals with the peculiarities of our terrain, stressing that «our mountains have always been the allies of our people in the centuries», with the influence of the peculiarities of the mountainous terrain on the organization, armament, tactics and the training of the Army, on the role and the place of the various arms and services in a partisan war and a modern war and a number problems of training and education. «However», the author stresses, «in fighting, both in the plains and the mountains, under any conditions of terrain and weather, man is the decisive factor which determines the fate of the battle, regardless of the development of armaments». This is the basic principle of our entire military structure on which a whole series of measures and tasks depends. From this we infer that work with man, his education and tempering, the raising of this socialist consciousness in the loyal service of the people, the Party and the Homeland, is a permanent task of the organizations of the Party and the Youth in the Army, of all its communists and cadres. In the booklet we find the first interpretations of our military thinking on Military People's Art according to the teachings of the Party and Comrade Enver Hoxha which over these years were further developed, enriched and crystallized, with

the fundamental ideology of our Party, its military line, as a base.

The problems Comrade Mehmet Shehu treats in his book are of very great theoretical and practical value to our People's Army, to all the structures of our Armed Forces. They help us know better and correctly assess the very rich experience of our National Liberation War, broaden the political and military horizon of our cadres, who will learn that our scientific military thinking is the most advanced one, because it is based on the teachings of Marxism-Leninism and our Party, it was formed, grew, was developed and sanctioned in fierce struggle against bourgeois-revisionist classicist concepts of the internal and external enemies to our country.

The booklet preserves its political and military actuality to this day, when, with «the iron broom of the Party», we have swept away the putschist group which, inside the Army, wanted to liquidate our Military Art of People's War, the military line of our Party and replace it with the revisionist and bourgeois military art. The political, ideological and military preparation of our Army and of all the structures of our Armed Forces is built completely on the bases of our Military Art of Peoples' War. This is the only correct road based on triumphant Marxism-Leninism which our Party of Labour defends consistently.

Comrade Mehmet Shehu's booklet is a great lesson and encouragement to all the cadres of the Army, to all army-men, volunteers, pupils and students

to study the very rich experience of our National Liberation War with the greatest persistence and zeal, because only in this way will it be easier for them to study, analyse, understand and master our Military Art of People's War better. As in every other field, in the defence problems, too, our Party has always implemented the immortal teachings of Marxism-Leninism in a creative manner.

THE MINISTRY OF PEOPLE'S DEFENCE

Tirana, January 1977.

Our National Army¹ grew out of the National Liberation War¹, out of the struggle of the Albanian people for the liberation of their country from the foreign invaders and the local traitors.

Our National Army now is no longer at the stage it was during the National Liberation War. It has traversed a road of development of several years. Our task is to study the valuable experience of the National Liberation War, to see what the legacy of this experience is and what development our National Army should undergo today.

A comprehensive study of all the theses connected with this experience cannot be made at this brief meeting of the higher officers of the National Army who have gone through the National Liberation War. These theses will be given a more concrete expression only as a result of a collective work which should be done by all of us. Today, therefore, by means of this report we want to submit to you a preliminary analysis of the experience of the Na-

1 At the beginning, following the liberation of the country, our Army was called «The National Army», later it assumed the name of «The People's Army», which it has kept to this day.

tional Liberation War as a basis of discussion about the conclusions and views that will be voiced here. In the future, all of us should delve into the content of this analysis, and through the threshing out of opinions, do such sound work as will enable us to carry our National Army forward.

I — BIRTH AND GROWTH OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY

With the coming of Italian fascism to Albania, a new stage began in the history of the Albanian people, the stage of famine and misery, of the bitterest bondage. The Italians established themselves in our land as though it were a province of Italy. They robbed us of our land, of our national resources, defiled everything that was sacred to our people; they turned our country into a huge barracks and brought in large armies; they transformed Albania into a military base, a springboard for their aggression on the other peoples of the Balkans. All the local enemies of the people, all those who had been in the service of the Turks and of Zog, became blind tools of fascism.

In this situation our people were faced with the alternative: **either to rise in an unequal war against fascism for national independence and freedom or**

accept submission, poverty, starvation, shame, bondage and their extinction as a nation and as a people. This time the situation was not like prior to 1912, or 1920, or 1924. This time the National Liberation War, which our people were called upon to wage, had to liberate the country from the foreign yoke and at the same time eliminate internal reaction and establish a People's Democratic Government.

The mistakes of the past ought not to be repeated. To attain their end, the Albanian people had to be organized, mobilized and led by a revolutionary political party. But who could take this task upon himself? Who could mobilize, organize and lead the people in the National Liberation War? Only the **Communist Party** could do that. And the Albanian Communist Party was founded on November 8, 1941.

No sooner had the Communist Party been organized than it set about its revolutionary work. It faced difficult tasks. The experience of the endeavours and struggles of the Albanian people in the past had shown that without a correct, revolutionary political leadership, all the efforts of the people would be of no avail. The Communist Party had to mobilize the broad masses of the people, educate them on the road to national liberation and people's revolution, organize them and hurl them into armed struggle against the fascist invaders and the local traitors. **There was no other way of salvation except through the armed uprising of the entire people.** And the Communist Party did it. As early as the first days of its founding it began agitating among the

masses through leaflets, rallies and conferences. This is how the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party represents the situation in one of its leaflets in 1941:

«For more than two years now the Italian fascists are trampling our country underfoot, are wronging us in all sorts of ways. Assisted by a few Albanians, their tools and traitors to Albania, they have deprived us of our national freedom, are trying to denationalize us, to corrupt our youth, to Italianize our schools. For over two years now the enemy are using our country as a base for their expansion into the Balkans, a base of their war against the national freedom of the fraternal Greek and Yugoslav peoples, they are shelling our villages and towns, destroying the houses and property of our peasants and city dwellers...

The Italian fascists have occupied our homes... are sowing religious discord... are robbing the people of their bread... They are forcing the peasant to hand over his grain and livestock...

Faced with this situation, we cannot allow ourselves to sit with folded arms. Therefore we call on all honest Albanians who really love Albania to muster all their forces and place them in the service of our National

Liberation War. Open war is the only stand to take towards the invader. Every son and daughter of this country should be a fighter of the National Liberation War. In order to triumph over the enemy, our struggle should be organized, united and powerful. All the Albanians are called upon to take up arms and join the partisans... Partisan war will be the truest expression of the determination of the people to free themselves of fascist bondage and live in freedom...»¹

This was the situation in Albania in 1941. The line of our Party over the National Liberation War of our people emerges clearly from this. Waging «open war on the enemy, our Party maintained this stand to the end. This was the slogan of our people's armed uprising. The uprising had to be carried out through to the end, without any compromise. The Party took account of all the consequences of the people's armed uprising, foresaw the way the National Liberation War would develop and found the most expedient methods of its organization, the way to victory. It remained loyal to the Marxist theory of the armed uprising, according to which:

«...You should never play with the uprising, never flag in your determination to

1 «Principal Documents of the PLA», 2nd Albanian edition, Vol. 1, pp. 30-31.

carry it through to the end. The uprising is an equation of many unknowns, the quantity of which may change from one day to another. The armed forces against which you have to act possess all the advantages accruing to them from traditional organization, discipline and authority; if the insurgents are unable of rallying large forces against their enemy, they will be defeated and wiped out. Second, once the uprising is on, you should go about it with the greatest determination, and switch over to the offensive. . .¹

Our Party set up the National Liberation Front and organized the people's armed uprising. Our uprising, our National Liberation War, went through various phases which we may define, for instance, as follows:

1. The phase of minor actions (guerrilla warfare);
2. The phase of small fighting units;
3. The phase of battalions and groups;
4. The phase of brigades;
5. The phase of major units (divisions — army corps.).

Our National Army was formed through these phases. Let us examine them in brief.

1. The phase of minor actions (guerrilla warfare). Preliminarily, strikes, demonstrations, collective pro-

1 F. Engels, «Selected Military Works», Vol. 1, p. 69 (Alb. ed.).

tests were the most expedient forms of fighting the invader. Towards the end of 1941 these forms no longer responded to the concrete circumstances: the Italian fascists and the quisling gendarmes were putting down the demonstrations by armed force. When the rascists opened fire on the crowds of demonstrating people it became clear that demonstrations could not longer be considered as the main form of combating the enemy, that our movement had gone beyond the limits of this form of struggle, that it was time it went over to a superior form, **the people's armed struggle against the enemy**. And the Party, which organized and led this struggle, issued clear directives on the new forms of war. What should the new form of struggle be? Could it be the immediate people's general uprising? This was impossible, without political preparation and appropriate military organization. Thus, the Party issued directives on the forming of **guerrilla units** to wipe out spies and traitors, to blow up enemy depots, cut enemy telephone lines, and other such minor actions. These actions started to be carried out throughout Albania. They were carried out by small partisan units set up by the party organizations. The Party took special care for the organization of these units and their technical and military training. The guerrilla units wiped out spies and traitors, carried out incessant acts of sabotage, raided and set on fire enemy depots, attacked isolated enemy patrols, banks, fascist officers, etc.

What was the difference between the terrorism.

(wiping out enemies to the people) the Narodniks resorted to in Russia prior to 1900, and this form of action which we used during the National Liberation War? It would be wrong to draw a parallel between this form of action of our struggle and the individual terrorism of the Narodniks. The terrorism of the Narodniks was not based on the organization of the masses for a general revolutionary uprising but had the character of isolated individual actions bereft of all perspective. The Narodniks intended to carry out the revolution by means of individual acts of terrorism, through the «heroes» who would then be followed by the masses, the «ignorant populace». The terrorism of the Narodniks was not **one of the forms of the struggle** to prepare the armed uprising of the masses, it was their **sole means of struggle**. Our actions were of a completely different nature. They were **one of the means of our struggle** that served only as a **preparation** for switching over to higher forms of struggle. They were organized and planned with a view to the perspective, were carried out at the appropriate moment, and were indispensable in the first, preparatory phase of the war. Ours were not isolated actions; they were combined with the mobilization of the masses in demonstrations, with the calling on the masses to rise in open war against the enemy. They were not acts of **individual retribution** but **military actions**. This is how Lenin approaches this subject:

«Terrorism* did not in the least conform to the state of mind of the masses. Terrorism trained no leaders for the struggles of the masses. Terrorism was a result — as well as a symptom, a concomitant of the lack of faith in the uprising, of the unripeness of the necessary conditions for the uprising... The actions of the partisan fighting units train the leaders directly for the struggle of the masses. The actions of the partisan fighting units, far from being a result of the lack of faith in the uprising or of its unfeasibility, are on the contrary, an essential component of the revolution...»¹

This form of partisan warfare was necessary and unavoidable in our country just as it was necessary and unavoidable for all the revolutionary uprisings in other countries, even in Russia prior and during the Great October Revolution. **Incessant minor actions are the primary basis of partisan tactics.** They harass and harm the enemy, make their situation insecure. On the other hand, they help raise the morale of the masses and strengthen their mobilization for the uprising.

Along with the guerilla units in the towns,

* Reference is made to the individual terrorism of the Narodniks.

1 V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 10, pp. 118-199 (4th Russian ed.).

guerilla units were set up in villages and regions, too. However, the guerilla units in the countryside played rather the role of propagandists than of active fighting units. This was but too natural for they had to carry out agitation and propaganda in the countryside to prepare the masses politically, to organize the people's administration and the partisan fighting units. They had to do this, because our Party was short of cadres for carrying on political agitation in the countryside and also because the objectives of the enemy were mainly in cities. This clearly indicates the **political character** of our units, and as we shall further see, the political character of all our military detachments, as an absolutely necessary prerequisite for the military forces of the revolutionary uprising.

The guerilla units were the true pioneers of our National Liberation Army. They were made up of volunteers, party or non-party members and sympathizers, all of them armed. And where the units worked as they ought to, there the masses were linked more closely with the Party and the Front. Where our guerilla units were more active, there were laid down sounder bases for their further enlargement and the creation of the Army.

2. — **The phase of small fighting units.** One cannot determine with precision when the phase of guerrillas ends, and that of small fighting units begins, since these two forms of military organization overlap each other. About 1942 the actions of

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our guerrilla units compelled the enemy to resort to acts of unrestrained terror against the people as a means of frightening them into submission. Thousands of Albanians were imprisoned or deported to Italy. Many of them were hanged or murdered by the fascists. The occupation weighed heavier on the shoulders of our people. The enemy began carrying out large-scale military operations in the regions where the guerrilla units were active. The guerrilla form of organization could no longer cope with the new situation; the war was being extended beyond the capacities of our guerrillas. Agitation had to be separated from military actions. The guerrilla units had to be transformed into larger units: the need arose of setting up small fighting units.

In connection with this, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania issued the directives on the setting up of partisan units. Each unit was made up of 50 to 60 men. It was headed by the commander (who need not necessarily be a party member) and the political commissar. This was the origin of the function of the political commissar in the detachments of our Army.

The formation of these units imparted fresh vigour to the National Liberation War. No sooner they were set up than they began striking the garrisons and communication lines of the enemy. They were **mobile** military detachments operating within a specified region. In many instances they were active in the countryside, while the guerrilla units operated in the cities. The guerrilla units remained for

a long time as the only form of organization of the struggle in the cities. Small fighting units were also organized on a village scale; they were **stationary** though, on alert, they would take up arms and rush to the assistance of the mobile fighting units or when necessary would fight on their own (especially in Vlora, Mallakastra, Kurvelesh). Thus in some regions, **the entire people** would take active part in the armed struggle. With the setting up of small fighting units, the enemy was forced to change their tactics; they began using large forces and stepped up their terror against the population by killing, imprisoning and interning people **en masse**. Many villages and entire regions were burnt down during enemy operations. However, where the fighting units were active, where the fighting was fierce, where people shed their blood in struggle with the enemy, where they were told the truth about the hardships and sufferings of the war, there they linked themselves more closely to us. Lenin teaches us that in the armed uprising:

«If you hide from the people the absolute necessity of a determined, bloody life-or-death struggle, as an urgent task for the coming actions, you deceive yourself and the people.»¹

Comrade Stalin, too, when he went on air on July 3, 1941 to call on the people for a stern war against the fascist aggressors, said:

1 V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 11, p. 183 (4th Russian ed.).

«It is necessary, first of all, that our people should understand all the gravity of the danger threatening our country and put aside soft-heartedness, light-heartedness, a state of mind characteristic of the period of peaceful construction, which though fully conceivable in pre-war days, is fatal at this time when the war has changed the situation radically. The enemy is savage and ruthless... The Soviet people should understand this and put an end to carelessness, they should mobilize themselves and organize their entire work in a new manner appropriate to the situation of a war that knows no mercy for the enemy.»¹

This has been confirmed by our own experience. When the people were not warned in time of the hardships of the war, at the decisive moment they would waver but when the people were politically enlightened and prepared to face up to the hardships and terror of war, when they were organized and mobilized they would remain unbending before any difficulty and triumph over the enemy.

These small fighting units caused the enemy great damage but this form of organization, too, after a time, failed to meet the needs of the war:

a) actions were not properly coordinated; liaison and concerted actions among units were lacking;

b) the units were small and could not cope with the large-scale operations of the regular armed forces of the enemy against our regions.

1 J. V. Stalin, «On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union», pp. 6-7, Tirana 1952.

Hence the necessity of expanding the partisan army, of setting up battalions, groups and commanding staffs.

3. — **The phase of battalions and groups.** Battalions began to be formed in 1943. A number of small fighting units were placed under joint command and formed battalions. But the phase of battalions did not last long. With their formation, the need arose of setting up groups made up of several battalions dependent on the district or regional staff. During 1943 our war assumed major proportions. The Party organizations could not occupy themselves directly with organizing the military actions of every battalion or group. The need arose of setting up the General Staff to coordinate and direct the actions of all partisan detachments. The General Staff was set up on July 10, 1943. The Army was being developed at a more rapid rate.

4. — **The phase of brigades.** With the formation of the General Staff our Army began to assume the aspect of an Army of regular partisan detachments. On August 15, 1943 the 1st Storm Brigade was formed with other brigades following suit later. The formation of brigades did not immediately eliminate the battalions and groups. While the group functioned as the military detachment of a specific region and was not directly dependent on the General Staff but on the staff of the related district

or region, the brigades were dependent directly on the General Staff and their field of activity extended throughout the country, according to the needs of the General Staff. They were, so to speak, reserves of the General Staff which could be moved from place to place, as the need might arise. The actions of our brigades nailed down large enemy forces, even whole divisions. The 1943-1944 Winter Operation and the June 1944 Operation put our National Liberation Army to a severe test. But our brigades managed to preserve their manpower while inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. The enemy were unable to attain their objective of wiping out our partisan forces.

At the Congress of Përmet in May 1944, another important step was taken in the organization of our Army. There the hierarchy of the Army was set up and General-Colonel Enver Hoxha was appointed Commander-in-Chief. The Congress decided further to mobilize all the people for the struggle against the invaders and traitors and to re-organize the Army into large formations.

5. — The phase of major units (divisions-army corps). The Congress of Përmet decided to set up divisions. The 1st Storm Division was formed and ordered to liberate Central and North Albania. Divisions were operative units. They enabled us to launch our successful general offensive for the complete liberation of Albania. Experience demonstrated that these organization forms of our Army were not

only expedient but also indispensable. Neither the regions of Central and Northern Albania nor the cities of Tirana and Shkodra could have been liberated with units smaller than divisions. Manoeuvring with divisions required from us to master military art. Our cadres had not studied in military schools but they learned military art in the process of war itself, in the vicissitudes of the struggle, they profited from the general experience of the war and were able to direct large-scale operations with large units, divisions and army corps. During the phase of divisions and army-corps, battalions and autonomous groups were reorganized and the Army assumed a more regular form of organization.

II. — THE EXPERIENCE OF THE PARTISAN (NATIONAL LIBERATION) WAR

A. Some Assessments of the Experience of the Partisan War.

The experience of the partisan war is invaluable for us and our Party. For the first time in their history, our people could organize themselves for such a major and heroic war. We must make a thorough analysis of the experience of our National Liberation War and profit from this experience for the modernization of our National Army. What have

we learned from our National Liberation War? What conclusions can we draw from the experience of this war?

1. The experience of the war waged by our people showed as early as April 1939, when the fascist troops landed in Albania, that an army like Zog's could not defend the country from external aggression. Zog's was a reactionary army in the service of landlords and aghas. Its cadres were educated in a fascist spirit. They had not the defence of the Homeland in their blood. Zog's army was unable to fight against the Italian invaders, for it was commanded by reactionary officers and utterly unprepared for such a war. An army of this kind was destined to capitulate. That little armed resistance put up at Shëngjin, Durrës, Vlora and Saranda was offered by the soldiers (peasants, workers and highlanders) on their own, and not because they were issued any orders for armed resistance from above. This bitter experience proved Marx Engels' words:

«Monarchy cannot risk its existence in a revolutionary war, in an uprising of the masses, in revolutionary terror. It would rather join in with the most dangerous enemy of the people than with the people...», «the revolution of the masses, the people's general uprising are means which a monarchic regime is afraid to make use of...»¹

1 K. Marx and F. Engels, Works, Vol. 6, p. 418, 2nd Russian edition.

Historical experience shows that this has always been the case.

2. The experience of our war has taught us that, no matter how small in numbers, when a people have a **strong political leadership**, a political party to mobilize, train, organize and lead them in armed struggle, they can fight and win over a superior enemy. In the past, our people were not successful in their wars because they lacked a political party capable of leading them in their just wars. During the National Liberation War our people were able to cope with all the hardships of an unequal struggle, because at the head of the movement stood its organizer and leader, the Albanian Communist Party, which through its correct policy conducted the people from victory to victory.

The experience of our war taught us that where our organizations¹ were stronger, there fighting was fiercer, the enemy was dealt heavier blows, successes were greater and the people were more closely bound to the Party.

3. The experience of our war shows that:

«A people who want to gain their independence must not confine themselves to ordinary means of war. The mass uprising, the revolutionary struggle, all-out guerrilla actions are the only means by which a people smaller in number can win over a more powerful ene-

1 Party organizations (Editor's Note).

my, by which a weak army can face a stronger, better armed and better organized army.»¹

What would have happened had we based ourselves on the principle of a mathematical calculation of forces as the regular bourgeois armies do? We would have arrived at one conclusion: to give everything up, to surrender to the enemy unconditionally. But our Party did not choose the way of dogmatism, of petrified principles, which characterize bourgeois military art. Basing itself on Marxist science, our Party found the most suitable forms of war, adapted them to our conditions and threw our people into **stern armed struggle** against the enemy:

a) In the first place, our Party was clear from the very beginning that ours would not be an ordinary war like that waged between two bourgeois armies. It did well know that it would be a people's war against the foreign invaders. That is why right at the start it worked systematically to give the war of our people a **political character** and a correct course. For this purpose our Party mobilized, trained and organized the broad masses of the people for the war against the invaders. Had the people not been made conscious of the necessity of their war it would not have been possible to mobilize them and form the Army. Wiping out enemy agents and spies, sabotage actions, cutting enemy communications lines, attac-

1. «Partisan War in the Classics of Marxism-Leninism», p. 32, the Publishing House of the Army, Tirana.

king enemy garrisons and posts, liberating regions and cities — these were the forms of our war. Guerilla units, small fighting units, battalions, brigades, divisions and army corps — these were the organizational forms our Party employed to build up our National Liberation Army. Our tactics could not remain the same from the beginning to the end of the war. It had to undergo a positive development; strikes, mass protests, wiping out spies and traitors — these were the initial forms of our war. Partisan actions had to evolve from harassing the enemy, causing confusion in their ranks and rendering them incapable of controlling the situation, liberating villages and whole regions to the general uprising and the complete liberation of the country. This was how our partisan war developed.

b) Our Party knew how to conduct the war along the right lines. It was aware that Albania had liberated itself from foreign occupation in 1912 and again in 1920, but neither in 1912 nor in 1920 had the people been the winners. Therefore, it could no longer permit that the people should do the fighting and others reap the fruits of their victories. Our Party foresaw the political development of our war and led it with a double purpose: **to liberate the Homeland from the invaders, and at the same time, from the local traitors, faithful lackeys, to the invaders.** Our war was a **profoundly popular democratic revolution** which had to **overthrow** everything that smacked of reaction **foreign fascism and internal reaction».**

c. Our Party gave our Army its political character. Had our partisans not been conscious of what they were fighting for, our Army would not have been able to carry out its historic mission. That is why a new organization and a new method, quite different from those of the bourgeois armies, were used in our Army. The **political commissars** represented the Party in the Army. Our detachments and units were under the command (as they are today)¹ not only of their commanders but of their political commissars as well. The political commissars educated our partisans politically. The political commissar was the basic element giving our Army its political character. **Without political commissars and political organs in the Army, we would have been unable to prepare our Army politically and morally,** we would not have an Army of men ready at any time to lay down their lives for the people. Without political commissars and political organs our Army would not have been much different from the bourgeois armies. Determination, self-sacrifice, love of country, sense of duty at work and in battle are the characteristics which our partisans made their own thanks to the work of the Party in the Army.

d. Our Party organized our people for the war and led them through it to the end **without any compromise with the enemy.** During the war days the spirit of compromise and sectarianism manifested itself both within the Party and the Army. But the

¹ 1 April 1947.

Party dealt in time with these mistakes which were at variance with its line. This is, for instance, how comrade Enver Hoxha reacted to the mistake which the Command of the Berat Group committed when it made a compromise with the Germans in November, 1943:

«Your deal with the Germans is not at all correct. In your letter you refer to it as «a sort of compromise». No, comrades, it is not a sort of compromise, but a compromise through-and-through and an intolerable action that must be condemned. We could have expected everything from a partisan command but not to come to an agreement, be it for one moment, with the bitterest enemy of our people and mankind. That never would have crossed our minds. We cannot imagine that comrades like you, who have been fighting arms in hand for two years now, would try to justify their grave mistake, a thing which we have mercilessly been pointing out with the pen and the rifle to the «Balli Kombëtar» and all reaction. Even if it came to losing the entire army, to putting at stake all you have achieved so far, YOU SHOULD NEVER HAVE*

* Here reference is made to the opportunist stand of the command of the Berat Region which allowed for a time, in September and October, the entry of German forces into Berat.

STRUCK UP AN AGREEMENT WITH THE BARBAROUS NAZIS.»¹

Likewise, the Central Committee of the Party condemned any manifestation of sectarianism, determined to preserve the line of the Party crystal-clear against the danger posed both by Rightism and opportunism, and Leftism.

e. Our Party educated its members in the spirit of self-sacrifice and determination in the war against the invaders and local traitors. **The party members were the first in the attack and the last in the retreat.** They were exemplary for their courage and discipline, and without them the partisan detachments would not even have existed. Many party members and young communists laid down their lives with the words, «Long live the Party!» on their lips.

f. From the very beginning our Party issued the slogan, «**Fierce war to the enemy!**» From the very beginning it came out with the slogan, «**Death to Fascism! Freedom to the People!**» But for the people's uprising against the invaders and traitors to be carried out more than the mobilization and organization of the people and of the partisan units was required, **weapons**, too, were absolutely necessary. This was an armed uprising, not a peaceful demonstration. But although we lacked weapons, our Party did not wait for others to provide us with weapons.

1 «Documents of the General Staff of the ANLA», 2nd edition, Vol. 1, p. 145 (Alb. ed.).

It set up partisan fighting units even though at the beginning they had no weapons. The enemy had the weapons; we had to attack the enemy and wrest the weapons from them to arm ourselves. And this we did. If we had told an officer graduated from a military academy that we would organize the war despite our lack of arms, he would have called it «sheer madness and suicide». Our Party scorned the formulas of bourgeois military academies, it got its inspiration from Lenin's teaching that,

«Provided it has the due energy, an organized and united detachment represents a very great force. By no means should the formation of a detachment be abandoned or postponed under the pretext that weapons are not there. ...»¹

«No party organization can 'arm' the masses. On the contrary, the organization of the masses into small, easily manoeuvrable units can, at the opportune moment, be of great assistance in regard to securing the weapons.»²

At the beginning, our units (guerrillas and detachments) had no modern weapons: some possessed shotguns, some had come with Italian, Greek or

¹ V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 11, p. 130 (4th Alb. ed.).

² V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 11, p. 130 (4th Alb. ed.).

Serbian muskets, some were armed with firelocks, breechloaders or carbines, and some had only pistols and bombs. But with them they attacked the enemy and wrested the weapons from them. **We fought the enemy with their own weapons, the weapons we wrested from them.**

g. **We lacked cadres.** The cadres had to emerge from the war itself, from the ranks of the partisans distinguished in battle for their courage, discipline and determination. Zog's cadres, almost all of them, offered their services to the invaders and the traitors. The Party said: **«The cadres will emerge from the war»**. This is how comrade Enver Hoxha replied to the commander of a partisan battalion, who asked for cadres on November 8, 1943:

«This request of yours comes to us as a complete surprise... It seems to us that you have not yet understood that the battalions and fighting units are the real sources from which commanders, vice-commanders and political leaders, like commissars and vice-commissars, should emerge. It is from efforts and battle that these leaders emerge, but of course, those people do not spring up spontaneously like mushrooms. We see with regret that your war-seasoned battalion made up of 204 partisans, as it is, should be in need of leaders...;*

* For a battalion vice-commander and commissar and for some company commissars.

the leaders of that battalion have not given proper consideration to this point, so delicate and vital to our war, that is, TO PROMOTING SUCH ELEMENTS AS ARE DETERMINED TO FIGHT TO, AND TRAINING THEM IN, THE RANKS OF LEADERS; our comrades in that battalion have taken this matter up in a very superficial and sectarian manner...»¹

Our Party has solved the problem of cadres in our National Liberation War by «**promoting such elements as were determined to fight to, and training them in, the ranks of leaders.**» This was done by putting workers and peasants, distinguished in the war, at the head of our detachments. This was how the social composition of our army cadres was set on sound bases.

h) **We lacked clothing, footwear and foodstuffs; but we were the soldiers of the people, for we had emerged from, and were fighting for, them.** The people held us as their dearest sons and daughters; they shared with us, the partisans, even their last hunch of bread. Albania all over became a base for the partisans. This was a people's war.

But the enemy themselves were another important source of supply for us: we raided **the depots,**

¹ «Documents of the General Staff of the ANLA», 2nd edition, Vol. 1, pp. 153-154.

of the enemy. If we had told a professional military of Zog's army that we had no arms, nor ammunition, nor clothes, nor footwear, nor supplies, but that we would fight the enemy with their own weapons, that we would feed and cloth ourselves from the enemy's own supplies, this military «expert» would have told us that we were crazy and had not the slightest idea of what military art was. But our Party, armed with the Marxist-Leninist theory, knew how to wage its fight although at first we had no arms or supplies. This is how in 1943 the Command of the General Staff of the ANLA replied to the commanders of regions and partisan groups who demanded clothing and footwear from the General Staff:

«Such requests astonish us.

It must be borne well in mind and understood that we started the war with no other aids except those provided by the people, and it must be known that we will carry it through to the end relying only on these aids. We should not count on other eventual assistance (be it even from the allies) for it is so insignificant as to deserve no mention.*

* British military missions were attached by the Allied Mediterranean Command to the General Staff allegedly to assist the Albanian National Liberation Army with arms, ammunition, clothing and footwear. But their real aim was to sabotage the struggle of the Albanian people against fascism and its collaborators. Instead of the National Liberation Army, they supplied with armaments, clothing, footwear and

The commanders should be clear about it that clothing, footwear and weapons should be wrested from the enemy; our source of supply lies only in the raids on enemy depots; YOU MUST FIGHT IN ORDER TO TAKE ALL THESE THINGS FROM THE ENEMY.¹

This is how we conducted the war against the enemy.

i) The Party focussed its attention especially on the labouring peasantry and the working class, The bulk of those who filled the ranks of our fighting units and brigades were peasants (farmers, shepherds, farm-hands) and workers. This was not casual. It was the logical consequence of the centuries-long oppression our peasants and workers had suffered. The poor and middle peasants and the workers had first-hand experience of the oppression by the former regimes and fascism. They were the classes most interested in the objectives of the National Liberation War:

- to liberate the country from the invaders;
- to do away with local reaction;
- to set up the People's Democratic Republic and the Democratic Government;

money the reactionary forces, the «Legaliteti», «Balli Kombëtar», and other traitor organizations which were collaborating openly with the Italian and German invaders.

1 «Documents of the General Staff of the ANLA», Vol. 1, pp. 39-40, (2nd Alb. ed.).

— to nationalize the large estates of feudal chiefs and the wealth accumulated by big merchants and speculators, and to carry out the Land Reform;

— to build a happy life in a free and truly democratic Albania.

That is why these social strata (the poor and middle peasantry as well as the whole of the working class) made up the social basis of our movement, of our war, and our Army. The Party won the confidence of these masses, mobilized, organized, trained and threw them into armed struggle against the enemy. In the armed struggle for national liberation the militant alliance of the labouring peasantry with the working class was formed and consolidated, and the working class played its leading role in this alliance through its vanguard, the Communist Party.

j) Our National Liberation Army and people fought with a clear view of the perspective. Faced with the anti-fascist bloc, with the Soviet-Anglo-American coalition and the heroic resistance of the oppressed peoples, confronted with the will of the peoples for freedom, the forces of darkness were doomed to fail, and our course would lead inevitably to the growth of our forces, the expansion of the war, the strengthening of the national consciousness, the weakening and destruction of the enemy, and the complete liberation of the Homeland. Ours was a just war. It was the Party which opened up this perspective to our Army and people.

k) Our Party imbued our National Liberation Army with the feelings of brotherhood of the peo-

ples, with boundless love and sincere respect for the Soviet Union. Love for, and friendship with, the Soviet people were the basis of the Marxist education of our people and our National Liberation Army. In doing this our Party was guided by the principle of proletarian internationalism.

4) From the National Liberation War we learned the basic principles of revolutionary military art. Our war was an armed people's uprising. But Engels also teaches us that,

«The uprising is an art just as war and other kinds of art are»¹

From the actions of the guerrillas and small fighting units and the operations of the partisan brigades and divisions we learned **that in war, there can be no fixed rules and inalterable formulas**; that war is a complex of factors and elements whose development and combination make every formula, rule, decision, and conception, no matter how clear and well — pondered, change according to the changing situation. We were taught that in the development (process) of war, **nothing is fixed, inalterable, everything is changeable and variable**. In tactics, cut-and-dried prescriptions, schematic forecasts and dogmatic formulas lead to disaster. The ability of the command to analyse the situation concretely and make an objective assessment of the military and political circumstances in which the fighting is done

¹ F. Engels, «Selected Military Works», Vol. 1, p. 69 (Alb. ed.).

enables it to take correct decisions for the combat action. This is how the Party taught us to lead the partisan detachments and units in battle. This invaluable experience, these correct conclusions on the art of waging a partisan war are just as valid today for our Military Art, for leading our regular Army. They demand of us the mastery of the dialectical method in the tactical and operational command of the Army. They demand of us to be «**categorically opposed to abstract formulas of any kind, to doctrinarian prescriptions...**»¹ so as not to plunge into the mire of dogmatism; they demand from us to apply the method of an all-round analysis of the development of the military situation, and take decisions on the basis of this concrete analysis.

B. Some basic principles of Partisan Warfare

On the other hand, we have learned that our war cannot be successful if we do not base ourselves on some general guiding principles according to which we can organize, carry on and conclude the war. What, then, are the guiding principles, the basic principles in organizing, carrying on and directing a war according to the experience of our partisan war?

1. A revolutionary consciousness. In order to

¹ V. I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 11, p. 232, 4th Russian edition. ed.

triumph in war it is essential that the Army should, above all, be conscious of the war it is waging, should be a revolutionary Army. During the National Liberation War our partisans fought in very difficult conditions and circumstances with no shoes to their feet, with insufficient clothing, weapons and ammunition, **they fought and won over an enemy superior in numbers, means, organization and experience.** Our war was the expression of the moral and political superiority of our Army. Our National Liberation War demonstrated that our peasant and worker, all the Albanian people, **were morally superior to the enemy,** for they knew what they were fighting for, they were conscious of the significance of their war. The political education the partisan was imbued with in the ranks of the National Liberation Army made him **unflinching before difficulties, determined to fight for the Liberation of the Homeland, courageous and daring death.** Partisan discipline was characterized not by its form but its substance. The partisan fighter was obedient and disciplined, carrying out the orders of his superiors to the letter. This sense of discipline he acquired from the political education he was imbued with in the ranks of partisan detachments. Here emerges **the role of the Party in the Army,** for it is the Party which organizes and directs the work for the political education of the Army. For an army to be a weapon of the people, it must itself be the **«flesh and blood»** of the people. Our Army sprang up from the people, fought with, and for them. That is why it is a people's revolutionary Army.

2. The determination of the cadres and troops to carry the war through to the end, without any compromise, to achieve the ultimate goal of the war — victory. The application of this principle is essential both in the general framework of war as well as in the limited framework of a single battle. In the general framework of war we were guided by this basic principle. Our efforts, our all-out struggle, our **total** war on the enemy, waged with determination up till victory, the history of our war itself, proves the application of this principle on our part. Our war experience shows that even in minor engagements, in actions of small fighting units and guerrillas, even in individual actions (wiping out spies and traitors), this principle, i.e., the determination to attain the objective, and its consistent application to the end, is decisive for the development and the result of the action itself. This principle demands that, before setting to an action, you should carefully assess the situation, and after you have taken your decision, go about it with dogged determination to the end and face up to all the consequences arising from your action.

Those partisan detachments (brigades, larger or smaller fighting units) which proceeded in this manner achieved success. Those detachments which undertook actions without the will to fight, **without the determination to win**, even though they started the fighting, either left things half done or were unable to exploit all the circumstances to reap success.

3. **The principle of the main blow.** In actual fighting, it is impossible to distribute the forces evenly

throughout the sector of the operation. The main forces must be concentrated in the main direction, and thus achieve superiority over the enemy at a given place and time. Our forces must strike at the enemy there where they can inflict the heaviest losses on them, where our losses would be the slightest and our objective most quickly attained.

We have always been inferior to the enemy in number and means. This holds true as far as a general calculation of forces is concerned. But by concentrating our forces at a given time and on a given point, quickly and unobtrusively, we often achieved superiority over the enemy, attacked them and wiped them out. If you do not abide by this principle, you will **disperse** your forces, will never be able to achieve the necessary superiority over the enemy, and as a consequence will not attain your goal. But this principle must be understood properly. **The superiority of our forces over the enemy should not be reckoned only in terms of the number of troops and the amount of ammunition** each side has at its disposal. In addition to the number of troops or the units and armaments of either side in the battle, one should also take into account a range of other subjective and objective factors which play an important role in our case, as for instance, **the moral and physical condition of the detachments and units, their combat preparedness, the configuration and topography of terrain, the time and weather conditions** (by day, by night, in rainy or good weather), **the political situation of the territory where**

the action takes place, **the possibility of the regeneration of forces, the element of surprise, the political and military moment, etc.** Only after a detailed analysis of all these elements can correct conclusions be arrived at about the ratio of forces and the field of battle. Experience has shown that when we have calculated the ratio of forces properly we have met with success whereas when we have failed to analyse all these elements we have incurred losses.

The principle of the main blow applies to both the general context of war as well as to local and limited actions. **To choose the appropriate time and place or direction, and achieve superiority over the enemy at that time and in that direction, to deal them the main blow there and then — this is the essence of this principle.**

In the general context of partisan warfare the principle of the main blow plays an important role. In the general context of partisan warfare the application of this principle is more difficult than in a regular war. Why is it more difficult? It is more difficult because of the nature of partisan tactics itself which differs from the tactics of a regular army, as we shall see further.

4. **The spirit of attack.** For success in war it is essential that the entire Army should be imbued with the spirit of attack. Our partisan Army was an offensive army (in the tactical sense, not in the strategic sense of the word).

The spirit of attack is acquired especially by **attacking the enemy wherever they are and as often**

as the occasion presents itself. The experience of our war shows that those partisan detachments which did not let themselves fall into inactivity but engaged in active military operations, struck terror into the enemy and inflicted heavy losses on them while themselves coming off with very little loss. Vice-versa, those detachments which were not imbued with the spirit of attack not only were they unable to cause damage to the enemy to the extent they ought to, but became an easy prey to, and often were even defeated by, the enemy. Especially, we have seen this happen with the territorial battalions.

For an army to be imbued with the spirit of attack it is not necessary that all of it should always be on the attack. Under the spirit of attack we understand the dynamic activity of its detachments both in attack and in defence. It is impossible for the detachments of an army to be both on the offensive and defensive at the same time. But attack, the encounter with the enemy, is the principal action of a partisan army. For this principle to be implemented it is essential that every detachment, no matter how small, should strike and attack the enemy and score incessant successes, though they may not be always important. Our Party has understood the importance of this principle and done everything to educate all the partisan detachments in the spirit of attack. This is how, in September, 1943 the Command of the General Staff of the ANLA criticized the staff of a partisan battalion who had let themselves fall into inactivity:

«The members of that staff have not yet understood the tactics of partisan warfare. Partisans should never be on the defensive. But your standing on your own grounds means a defensive war in which our army may be forced to face superior enemy forces that would wipe it out. You must by all means abandon this tactics, because our tactics has an offensive character aimed at confusing the enemy through rapid movements and surprise strikes from all quarters..., by blowing up bridges and assailing German convoys incessantly (and not once in a month). Raid Italian and German depots and procure thereby the means to equip the new recruits swelling the partisan ranks.»¹

In topographical conditions like ours, in Albania's mountainous terrain, for partisan detachments, especially, offensive war, attack, is far more profitable than defensive war. Analyzing the principles of partisan warfare, Engels arrived at this conclusion:

«Once the uprising is on, you must act with the greatest determination and switch over to the offensive. Defensive war spells death to any armed uprising.»²

1 «Documents of the General Staff of the ANLA», 2nd Alb. ed., Vol. 1, p. 103.

2 F. Engels, «Selected Military Works», Vol. 1, p. 69 (Alb. ed.).

This means that partisan detachments should be on the attack. But as a form of warfare of **secondary importance**, defence is not excluded either. When some detachment (but never the bulk of the army, for in that case «defence would spell death to it») is compelled by circumstances to defend itself the defence should be of a dynamic nature, that is, it **should be sectional, temporary, elastic and dynamic**. Defence is best achieved through **rapid counter-attacks** which harass and wear out the enemy, and prepare the ground to switch over to the offensive at the first occasion.

As regards partisan warfare Engels points out the words of Danton, the master tactician of the French Revolution: «**Courage, courage and once again courage!**»¹ to our attention.

5. **Surprise.** In the hands of the enemy surprise would be fatal to us, whereas, in our hands, it is an important element for the success of our operations. For surprise to be effective, **the enemy should be hit where and when he least expects it**. Important though it may be to all armies, to a partisan army surprise is, in most cases, the **decisive** element for the success of its operations. The configuration of our country's terrain makes surprise possible for both us and the enemy. Our partisan detachments have always considered surprise as an element of primary importance. To avoid being surprised by the enemy

¹ F. Engels, «Selected Military Works», Vol. 1, p. 69. (Alb. ed.).

precautionary measures must be taken. Experience shows that those partisan detachments which have failed to take the necessary precautionary measures against any possible surprise action from the enemy have incurred heavy losses. Vice-versa, those partisan formations which have managed to catch the enemy by surprise have reaped success, even when they may have been inferior to the enemy in numbers and means. In a letter to the 1st Storm Brigade in November 1943, the Command of the General Staff, among other things, wrote:

“German bands consisting of 50 to 60 men, led, sure enough, by traitors, are coming to burn our villages and attack our fighting units in places where they are least expected to turn up. It is a fact, and you should point it out to all our comrades wherever you go, that in general our battalions think that they have still to do with Mussolini's army which lacked the fighting spirit. Wherever these German bands have gone to, they have caught our comrades off their guard. This happened at Peza, at the Battle of Arbana, this happened at Devoll and Voskopoja. The tactic which the enemy employs is that of incessant attacks so as to give us no respite. But this is our own tactic, and we should by no means let the enemy take the initiative. We are in our own land; we know our mountains and gorges better than the enemy does, in many regions

we have the people on our side, hence it is inadmissible that the enemy should take us by surprise.»¹

In conventional warfare surprise does not play so important a role as it does in partisan warfare. In conventional warfare, surprise has limited value, as the nature of conventional warfare itself allows no great intervals between detachments or units. In partisan warfare, however, especially in mountainous terrain, intervals between detachments and units are more or less great, surprise attacks are possible at all times and their effect may even be decisive for the operations. In partisan warfare surprise is an element of primary importance to counterbalance our inferiority to the enemy. Military operations at night, in rain, quick manoeuvring (rapid concentration and dispersion of forces) are the means that make surprise possible. In this connection Engels teaches us:

«The enemy should be caught unawares, when their troops are dispersed...»²

6. Manoeuvring (mobility). In partisan warfare the principle of manoeuvring is of major importance. Manoeuvring consists in the way of moving our for-

1 «Documents of the General Staff of the ANLA», 2nd. Alb. ed., Vol. 1, pp. 149-150.

2 F. Engels, «Selected Military Works», Vol. 1, p. 69, (Alb. ed.).

ces so as to catch the enemy by surprise and maintain the initiative, by attacking them at the place, the time and in the manner we want. The partisan war has taught us that, of all kinds of manoeuvring, that of attacking the enemy on the flanks, or better still, in the rear is the most profitable. Frontal manoeuvring has been rather of a demonstrative character and of secondary importance. Manoeuvring requires rapidity and mobility.

Experience shows that those detachments which have made use of manoeuvring as a tactical element of primary importance have scored success, while those detachments which have not known how to use it have not only fallen into inactivity but at the same time have become an easy target for the enemy and have suffered losses. **The spirit of attack cannot be developed without manoeuvring.**

If the 1st Brigade became a first-class storm brigade, this came about mainly because it always made use of manoeuvring as its main weapon. On the other hand, as long as the 4th Brigade was obliged to carry out its activity in the Korça region alone, in a narrow field of action, it could not score any major success over the enemy, but it became one of the best brigades when it started manoeuvring, resorting to mobility as a primary element of its actions, when it was removed from its narrow field of action and incorporated in the 1st Division operating in Central and Northern Albania.

In partisan warfare to allow the initiative to slip away from your hands, to mark time, to fall into

inactivity and fail to pursue the enemy, to fail to go for them but allow them to go for you, to pursue you, means sure defeat.

A partisan army is composed almost entirely of infantry. As such it has all the possibilities of being a manoeuvring army. There is no ridge or gorge, mountain pass or creek inaccessible to the partisan. This manoeuvring possibility enables the partisan detachments to attack the enemy on the flanks and in the rear and rout or wipe them out although they may have occupied positions impregnable to a frontal attack.

For partisan troops, especially in mountainous regions, offensive operations are far more profitable than defensive ones. Often, the enemy have assailed us with large forces. In these instances, had the partisan formations been assembled at one place they would even have been wiped out by the enemy's superior forces. By manoeuvring, our brigades have not only avoided being caught in the enemy's trap but have also **preserved their forces** and inflicted grave losses on the enemy.

Let us give some concrete facts. The (1943-1944) Winter Operation faced our forces with great difficulties. The 5th and 6th Brigades were set up during this Operation. The partisan forces were growing and it was only through their skilful manoeuvring in very difficult conditions that they were able to escape the danger of being wiped out by the superior forces of the enemy. The rapid manoeuvring of the 1st Brigade during its march from Mesaplik to Skrapar

and the fierce fighting it waged at the Tenda e Qypit January 20th to 26th 1944, made possible the formation of the 6th Brigade, enabled the withdrawal of our forces from the dangerous region of Zagoria to the relatively quieter zone of Dangëllia and the counter-attack of the 4th Brigade which resulted in the liberation of Gora and Opar. Later, the main burden of the operation fell on the 5th Brigade, which manoeuvred skilfully with scattered forces, and came to Këndrevica and Kurvelesh. The 6th Brigade hit the enemy in the rear, liberating a large area and facilitating the dynamic resistance of the 5th Brigade. In the meantime, the 1st Brigade switched over to the offensive, liberated Skrapar, Tomorica and Mokra, and part of its forces made a bold incursion deep into the areas where reaction was strongest (Mokra, Librazhd, Dibra, Mat, Malësi e Tiranës, Dumre) over Skrapar-Mokra-Çermenika-Golloborda-Martanesh-Mat-Shëngjergj-Peza-Dumre-Sulova. At the same time this thrust was aimed at preventing the reactionary forces from mounting a second operation against our forces in Central Albania.

During the 1944 June operation while the enemy were trying to encircle all our forces in Southern Albania and wipe them out, the Supreme Command ordered the 1st Division to break through the ring of enemy forces and launch the offensive for the liberation of Central and Northern Albania. According to this decision of the Supreme Command, which would have historic importance, the 1st Division had to carry out a large-scale manoeuvre, make a thrust

deep into the enemy disposition and attack their main strongholds and reserves. Although it came three times under encirclement by enemy forces in the Dibra region, the 1st Division, through skilful manoeuvring and with the spirit of attack as its main weapon, not only broke through all encirclements but in very short time managed to smash all the forces of the enemy and to liberate Central and part of Northern Albania.

The battle for the liberation of Tirana was the crowning of all the operations of our Army. In the fiercest fighting of all the war, the enemy forces were encircled and completely annihilated, although they were superior to our forces in number and means. This success was possible, first of all, because of the correct application by our command of the principle of **manoeuvring** and utilization of **reserves** and the resoluteness and spirit of attack of our partisans.

7. — **Initiative.** In the conditions of partisan warfare initiative is far more important than in the conditions of orthodox warfare. Initiative is one of the basic principles of partisan warfare, for without initiative, if a detachment waits always for orders and instructions to come from above, it would fall into complete inactivity and passivity. Partisan detachments operate always **independently** from one another, and their operations cannot be carried out in complete coordination as is the case with the operations of the units of a regular army. The experience of our partisan war has demonstrated that the

detachments imbued with the spirit of initiative had also a developed spirit of attack and always came off victorious. In partisan warfare, military operations are coordinated by means of directives of a general character, by war slogans, and orders from above which, as a rule, **should never be absolute** but elastic, intended to open up broad prospects for the activity of the commander of the detachment and guide him in his military operations over a relatively long period of time. For example, the partisan detachments of a region are given instructions to harass the lines of communications, raid the depots, and attack the garrisons, etc. of the enemy, but they are never told that on a certain day, at a certain hour, a certain operation is to be carried out with this or that many forces, etc. Thus, the result of partisan warfare in a region is the sum total of all the combat actions of the detachments operating in that region. Here is, for instance, what the staff of the 1st Division wrote on the spirit of initiative in the summer of 1944:

«... the nature of partisan warfare itself prompts and develops the initiative - as an essential elements without which a partisan war cannot be waged. In order to develop the spirit of initiative it is necessary:

— to abstain from giving cut-and-dried and absolute orders. Orders of this kind inhibit the initiative of the partisans and prevent its development. Whoever draws up operation or-

ders should see to it that they are not too rigid but are issued in the form of a directive or instruction so as to oblige those who will carry them out to rack their brains and find the way how to carry them out themselves;

— who has no self-reliance cannot have initiative, either. Therefore, to prompt the partisans' self-confidence they must be charged with various tasks and responsibilities and, at the same time, given instructions about, and asked to render account for, their execution.

— we must always be guided by the principle that «it is far better to make mistakes while acting than do nothing for fear of making mistakes.»¹

8. **Continuity of operations.** The experience of partisan warfare shows that continuity of military operations is not only one of the main principles of warfare in general but it is also the basis of all other principles underlying the development of all partisan military operations. Our Party has demanded of all its organs in the National Liberation Army that they engage the enemy in **continuous and uninterrupted** combat activity. This is what the Command of the General Staff of the ANLA wrote to the operational commands of areas and regions, towards the end of 1943:

¹ General Tactical Notions on Partisan Warfare, CPA, fund of the 4th Brigade, pp. 11-12; Fushë-Lura, August 22, 1944.

„The war you are to wage on the enemy should maintain the character of an uninterrupted offensive, with hard blows dealt at the enemy at the moment and the place they least expect them, with heavy losses for the enemy and little losses for our forces.

Avoid frontal combat and engagements at the place and the moment chosen by the enemy; never wait for the enemy to switch to the offensive but frustrate the offensive of the enemy before it is started».¹

Without applying the principle of continuity of military operations against the enemy the principle of manoeuvring would have no positive meaning; moreover, manoeuvring without assailing the enemy would lead to sure defeat. Only through repeated attacks, the moral superiority over the enemy, which is essential for the successful carrying out of operations, is maintained.

In his study of the armed uprising, Engels arrived at this conclusion:

„It is necessary to score every day fresh successes, small though they may be; it is essential to maintain at all costs the moral su-

¹ *„Documents of the General Staff of the ANLA», 2nd Alb. ed., Vol. 1, p. 78.*

*periority which is ensured with the first successful move of the insurgents. . . .*¹

These are, in general outline, the main principles underlying partisan warfare, people's armed uprising. On these general principles we have based ourselves in organizing and directing our National Liberation War. These general principles are valid for our Military Art today, too.

III. — COMPARISON BETWEEN A PARTISAN AND A REGULAR ARMY

A partisan army is very different from a regular army both in regard to organization as well as armaments and tactics. A partisan army is a special army, and consequently, the war it wages is a special war conducted under particular circumstances, different from those of a regular army. Which are the principal characteristics distinguishing a partisan army from a regular army?

1. **Difference in organization and composition.** A partisan army is made up of volunteers, of people

¹ F. Engels, «Selected Military Works», Vol. 1, p. 69 (Alb. ed.).

who have joined the partisan ranks of their own free will. **There are no age or sex limits** for admission to the partisan detachments. In the partisan ranks militate men of advanced age, young women, young men of military age, even children. In a regular army mobilization is not made on the basis of free will but in conformity with the law on **mobilization**:

A partisan army is almost entirely made up of infantry. Its organization is **simple**. Its strength lies in the spirit of attack, in quick manoeuvring, in surprise lightning strikes carried out mainly with rifles, automatic firearms, light and heavy machine guns, grenades, bayonets, and very few of other weapons. A regular army has a complicated organization, which is based not only on infantry but also on **all the arms** and specialities required by modern war. The cadres of a partisan army emerge from the people's war itself while the cadres of a regular army are, as a rule, trained systematically at military schools and academies.

2. **Difference in armament.** A partisan army emerges from the specific circumstances of a country occupied by foreign imperialist aggressors or a people oppressed by local reactionaries. The weapons and factories are in the hands of the invaders or the regime in power. Therefore, **the partisans initiate their war with whatever they can get hold of, and arm themselves with the weapons they wrest from the enemy.** Defining the tasks of the detachments of a revolutionary army, Lenin writes in 1905:

«The detachments may be of any size, starting with 2 or 3 people.

The detachments must arm themselves to the best of everybody's possibility (with rifles, revolvers, hand-grenades, knives, clubs, oil-soaked rags to set things on fire, ropes or rope-ladders of various kinds, shovels to set up barricades, pyroxyline petards, barbed wire, nails (against cavalry) etc., etc. People should not wait for help to come from others, from above, from abroad, but procure everything for themselves. . .

Even unarmed, these detachments may play a very important role: 1) by leading the people; 2) by assailing, at the opportune moment, isolated policemen, individual kossacks separated from their comrades (as has happened in Moscow), and taking their weapons; 3) by freeing the detainees or rescuing the wounded when there are not too many guards around; 4) by climbing on rooftops, upper floors, etc. to throw stones on the troops, to pour hot water on them, etc.»¹

Whereas partisan detachments fight with whatever means they can find and their weapons are, in the main, those of the infantry, a regular army is

¹ V. I. Lenin, Works, 4th ed., Vol. 10, pp. 485-486 (Alb. ed.).

equipped with complicated weaponry, like artillery, aircraft, warships, tanks, etc.

3. **Difference in tactics.** In general, the same basic principles underlying the warfare of a regular army apply also to partisan warfare; here, however, we want to take up the problem of the application of these principles in the conditions of partisan warfare. Let us have a look at the most obvious differences in tactics between a partisan army and a regular army.

a) A regular army looks for the enemy wherever they may happen to be in order to attack them in **pitched battle** and wipe them out. The purpose of a regular army is to engage the enemy on a regular front, to encircle and wipe them out **wherever they may be**, whether on its own or enemy territory. Partisan warfare has the character of the national resistance of a people, although partisan warfare itself is waged mainly through offensive operations within the national territory. **A partisan army strives to avoid frontal combat with the enemy and to strike them always on the flanks or in the rear.**

While the tactic of a regular army sets itself an objective which is directly related to the strategic (main) objective, partisan tactic set itself a loose objective which is only indirectly related to the main objective; this objective is, in most cases, achieved not through regular frontal attacks, but through surprise attacks, quick, lightning-like attacks where and when the enemy least expects them, in local conditions favourable to the partisans and unfavourable to

the enemy. In its regular operations; a regular army clears the terrain radically, mopping up all enemy troops, leaving no obstacles behind; partisan warfare is waged through and within the enemy's operational field by sabotaging and cutting enemy lines of communication, attacking isolated enemy forces and garrisons, raiding enemy depots, etc.; in other words, partisan tactics is aimed at causing the enemy incessant losses in many directions, at making the situation of the enemy insecure at any moment, nailing large enemy forces down on the internal front, striking terror into their hearts and making it impossible for the enemy to control the situation, and then, when the enemy are confused, have lost control of the situation, at carrying on the war and liberating entire regions and areas up to the general uprising and the liberation of the whole of country.

These are, for instance, the tasks Generalissimo Stalin set for the Red Army and the Soviet partisans on May 1, 1943:

«The Red Army as a whole must consolidate and further develop the successes of its winter operations, yield not one inch of our territory to the enemy, prepare itself for the decisive battles against the German fascist invaders. On the defensive, our men must display the stubbornness and stamina characteristic of the fighters of our army; on the offensive, they must show firmness, perfect coordination of actions among the various arms, bold

manoeuvring in the field of battle which should result in the encirclement and annihilation of the enemy.

The partisans must hit the enemy hard in their rear, along their lines of communication, at their military depots, staffs and settlements. They must cut all the communication lines of the enemy. In the regions occupied by the enemy, they must throw the broad masses of the Soviet people into active liberating war to save the Soviet citizens from being deported as slaves to Germany or exterminated by the Hitlerite beasts. They must take merciless revenge for the blood and tears of our children, of our mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters. They must do everything to help the Red Army in its war against the vile Hitlerite oppressors». ¹

So, then, in distinguishing between the tasks of a regular army and a partisan army, the **main** role devolves on the regular army, **for it alone** can encircle and wipe out the enemy, whereas the partisans play only an **auxiliary** role. This does not, however, mean that a partisan army cannot liberate its country from the invader, but simply that it does not have the organization, nor the armaments, nor the power to

1 J. V. Stalin, "On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union", pp. 90-91, Tirana, 1952 (Alb. ed.).

engage in pitched battle with a regular army and liquidate it. **It takes a regular army to liquidate a regular army.** In its development, a partisan army may eventually transform itself into a regular army. The tendency to such a transformation is essential.

b) To attain a given objective the tactics of a regular army, more than of a partisan army, is based on **numbers** (of men and means). Partisan tactics is based not so much on numbers, as, mainly, on surprise, rapidity (manoeuvring), the spirit of attack, and initiative, which counterbalance its inferiority to the enemy in number and means.

As we said above, surprise is an element of primary importance to a partisan army. Since partisan operations are independent from one another, surprise is always possible and often decisive for the outcome of local military operations. To a regular army, however, as the experience of the Second World War shows, the element of surprise is not a tactical element of first-hand importance, is not a decisive element of success, it is a tactical element of temporary, relative importance, and the greater the forces engaged, the more regular the front (in the plains, for instance) the less important becomes the role of surprise. The Germans considered surprise as a decisive element for the success of their «Blitzkrieg». They considered surprise as a reserve of their strength. This, for instance, is what Comrade Stalin said in his Order N. 55 of February 23, 1942, to the Red Army:

«The Germans have no longer now the military superiority they had in the first months of the war as a consequence of their perfidious surprise attack. Gone is the element of surprise and unexpectedness, the reserve factor of the German fascist troops. Thus inequality in fighting conditions, caused by the surprise attack of the German fascists, has been done away with. The fate of the war now will not be decided by such second-hand elements as that of surprise but by factors operating permanently: stability of the rear, the morale of the army, the number and quality of divisions, the armament of the army, the organizational ability of the commanding cadres of the army. And here must be pointed out that the German army faced catastrophe as soon as it had the element of surprise off its arsenal.»¹

But does this mean that the element of surprise is of no value whatsoever for a regular army? Not in the least. Surprise will remain always a tactical principle (element); it may not be decisive in operations of a broad strategic character, but in operations of a tactical character surprise will always play an important role, especially in mountainous terrain, and even more so, in partisan war.

1 J. V. Stalin, «On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union», p. 35, Tirana, 1952 (Alb. ed.).

We explained above how important the principle of manoeuvring is to a partisan army. This principle is of very great importance to a regular army as well.

Where lies the difference between a partisan army and a regular army in the application of the principle of manoeuvring?

In partisan warfare manoeuvring is, in most cases, carried out on the initiative of lower commands. It may happen, for instance, that after engaging the enemy and seeing itself hard put to it by the superior forces of the latter, a battalion withdraws on its own, without waiting for orders from above, that is, manoeuvring **on its own initiative**. As well as that, still on its own initiative, this partisan battalion may for a time move away from its own theatre of operations to that of another partisan battalion. Thus, in **partisan warfare manoeuvring assumes a much broader scope**. The whole country is for the partisan detachments a common theatre of operations where they can manoeuvre on their own initiative, except when the command issues «strict» orders.

In a regular army, manoeuvring has a **more disciplined** character. In a regular war one cannot manoeuvre as in a partisan war. There, each detachment is assigned to its own sector. Manoeuvring can be carried out **only on orders** from the command, and the initiative should never pass the limits of the **co-ordination of actions with the others** and go beyond the objective of the command.

The partisans fight in groups and units smaller than those of a regular army; partisan detachments or units are invulnerable by, and invisible to, the enemy; the partisans confuse the enemy with the mobility and activity of their different groups in different directions; they are in a position to find the most vulnerable spot in the disposition of the enemy, the most appropriate time and place for attack, which they would not do so well if they attacked the enemy jointly, at the same place and at the same time. The partisans should operate in such a manner as to keep the initiative always in their own hands.

c) Partisan tactic teaches us how to make the best use of terrain and put the enemy in unfavourable topographic conditions, where their means and manoeuvring capability would be of little avail. Since a regular army operates with larger units they cannot make proper use of terrain without employing all their means. By making the best use of terrain, a partisan army forces the enemy to fight in unfavourable topographic conditions where they are unable to put all their means to use, and as a consequence, to exploit the terrain fully.

d) A regular army has all modern means at its disposal whereas a partisan army has only infantry means at its disposal, and even those not completely. The partisans offset this inferiority with some other subjective and objective elements such as: resoluteness, conviction of the just nature of their war, the

spirit of attack, the ability to utilize the terrain, manoeuvring capability, surprise, initiative, fire-discipline, etc. Through their manoeuvring capability the partisans put many weapons of the enemy out of action by forcing them to fight in adverse topographical conditions which prevent the full use and co-ordination of all their means of war.

A regular army depends mainly on the **intensity of fire** of all its units while a partisan army depends more on the **quality of fire** (precision, discipline and surprise).

The experience of our partisan war shows that the activity of our detachments was not without many shortcomings. For instance, lack of liaison was one of their major failings. Likewise, partisan discipline lacked its formal aspect completely. Our detachments had the tendency to back up their fire from the highest hilltops, and not from their bottom; partisan detachments neglected fortification totally. Organization of military intelligence was weak. Like these, there were many other shortcomings which we must analyse in great detail and draw positive conclusions from them.

IV — SOME GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE CONDITIONS OF ALBANIA

After the Liberation of Albania our Army was re-organized and entered the road of its modernization.

As long as the capitalist system exists in Europe and in the world, the source of conflicts and wars will exist as well. With the triumph over fascism and the further development of events, the change brought about in the ratio of forces in the international arena does not yet seem to be compelling the reactionary world to give sound guarantees for permanent peace. The development of international events demands that the democratic forces be always ready to defend peace and democracy from the evil designs of the imperialist aggressors. The development of events in the Balkans: the intervention of the armed forces of the imperialists to back up the Greek monarcho-fascist regime and employ it in the role of the trouble-maker in our peninsula, the systematic provocations by the Greek monarcho-fascist army in our territorial waters and on our southern borders, the hatred of imperialist reactionary powers towards our democratic regime — all these things oblige us to strengthen and modernize our Army in order to make it capable of carrying out the tasks it is charged with: to defend the victories of our

National Liberation War, our national independence, peace and democracy.

From Albania's liberation to this day, our National Army has made great progress towards its modernization in organization, combat drill, training of cadres, armaments etc. Nevertheless, a long road lies still ahead of our army towards its further strengthening and modernization.

Here, we will try to present some general reflections on military operations and the nature of terrain in a mountainous country like ours. Later, we will see to what extent the mountainous nature of our country may influence the organization and armament of our Army, its tactic, its training and equipment. We must say, however, that our treatment of this subject cannot pretend to be exhaustive and definitive; it may serve only as a base for a discussion, which, later will certainly arrive at positive conclusions.

A. Peculiarities of Albanian Terrain

1. As the gate to the Balkans on the Adriatic, Albania has always been a crossroads of imperialist interests. From Trieste down to Karaburun, the eastern coast of the Adriatic rises like a steep wall of rugged rocks forming a serious natural barrier to all those who want to invade the Balkans from the Adriatic. Ranging from Ulqin to Vlora, however, this natural wall of the Balkan bulwark breaks off, and on the greater

part of this sector, the sea washes the sand of the shore, levelling it with the plains which stretch up to fifty kilometres inland. The ports of Shëngjin, Durrës, Vlora and Saranda are the gates to our country; from them the main roads irradiate into its interior, passing across fertile fields, gradually climbing hills and mountains, running along impetuous rivers and through hair-raising gorges, up to the innermost regions of our country. In winter heavy rains and flooding rivers turn our coastal plains, which make up almost 15 to 20 per cent of the whole area of our country, into swamps¹, but in summer the scorching sun makes them a suitable field for tactical manoeuvring by motorized detachments of the enemy which may eventually land on our coast, and which if not dealt with there and then may pose a threat to our main cities such as Tirana, Vlora, Fier, Berat, Elbasan, Shkodra.

2. As against the coast, which is flat and only partly covered with forests, the rest of Albania is mountainous, and nearly half of it, wooded. Most of Albania has a rugged and arduous relief: mountains, usually of a difficult profile, mountain ranges, which as a rule, run from north to south but which here and there take a transversal turn, and isolated mountains that stand out like natural fortresses over the rivers bending round them. The hills rising in front and between the mountain ranges are, generally, wooded or sparsely covered with tall trees or, most

¹ April 1947.

of them, thick shrubs; while the mountains, from 2000 metres above sea level and upwards, are denuded of all trees. The mountainous part of the country is covered with snow during the winter. Five impetuous streams rush along mountain ravines. In summer they are fordable (even though with difficulty), while in winter and spring, swollen with melting snow and falling rains, they cannot be forded: these rivers flow across Albania from the east and southeast to the sea.

Our mountains have always been the allies of our people in the centuries, positive factors in the resistance of our small nation against almost uninterrupted recurring external invasions. During the National Liberation War our mountains were the impregnable fortresses of our partisans.

3. Our lines of communication are insufficient for the operative needs of a regular war. The few of our roads are more of a logistical than tactical character. Running from the interior, from its main centres, almost perpendicular to our southern border, they prevent all quick manoeuvring in that direction. In the spaces between the main roads, there are areas large enough for the operation of whole divisions.

4. Taking account of the topographic conditions and the nature of the terrain, we can say that most of our country is mountainous and wooded, with insufficient roads, and only part of it, the coastal regions, is flat, which in case of an eventual land-

ing of the enemy may well become our most vulnerable sector.


B. The Influence of the peculiarities of mountainous terrain on the organization, arming, tactics and training of the army.

Taking into consideration the nature of the terrain of our country, as explained above, we should see how this influences the organization, arming and equipment, the tactics and training of our National Army. It must be noted that no cut-and-dried norms can be laid down: here we shall only strive to give a more or less objective exposition.

1. The influence of our terrain on the organization and armament of the Army. During the National Liberation War, as a partisan army, our Army had a simple organization which developed gradually. By the end of the war, we had tactical operative units, like divisions and army corps. But these units were almost 100 per cent infantry. From that time to this day¹ our Army has undergone great changes as far as its organization is concerned. It is not made up of only infantry but also of some other special arms. For the definition of the characteristics of organization of our Army we should rely firmly on the experience of the National Liberation War.

¹ April 1947.






Proceeding from this experience, which should be the characteristics of organization of our Army?

a) **Detachments, units and sub-units should enjoy large autonomy.** Generally speaking, in mountainous terrain both the offensive and defensive are not carried out in the same manner as in the plains. In the mountains, relief breaks up the front in several points, forming particular directions. Offensive operations are carried out by detachment acting independently in different directions towards one objective or a number of objectives. The forces of those detachments are not always in contact with one another; the nature of terrain itself compels them to act separately from one another. Operations of various columns converging on a common objective are coordinated not through direct contact between them but through the military command of the staff leading the columns and the common objective they have to attain. In the mountains, offensive operations are organized on a broad front in different **directions**, and carried out through simultaneous actions of several columns attacking in many directions for the attainment of one or more objectives.

In the mountains, however, not only divisions, which are tactical operative units, should enjoy large autonomy of action, but even regiments (brigades) and battalions, which are tactical units, and companies should be in a position to solve themselves, with the additional means they may be given, some limited tactical problems. In mountainous terrain autonomy

of action is necessary also in defensive operations. Defence in the mountains cannot be organized in the same manner as in the plains. In the plains, the sectors of defence are, in most cases, organized over an uninterrupted system of trenches, while in the mountains the principle of defence differs: defence there is organized on a broader front than in the plains, it is articulated on a system of strongholds manned by platoons and companies, and defence zones manned by battalions which may have only a fire link among them, and in many instances, not even that, when no active defence is needed, for example in the case of an impregnable rock rising between them. In the mountains it is possible for one company, one platoon, or, very often, even one squad to guard a peak or a pass, a ledge or a path. Hence, squads operating in the mountains should be of a sounder tactical composition than conventional squads operating in the plains. In the plains, for example, a squad of 6 or 7 men armed with a light machine gun and rifles would be strong enough to attack or hold its own in the disposition of a platoon, whereas in the mountains it cannot always operate in the disposition of a platoon. In the mountains, a squad defending a pass or attacking a machine-gun-nest of the enemy must have sufficient firepower; thus, for the operation to be carried out with success **the contingents of minor sub-units (squads or platoons) must either be increased or accordingly re-enforced by organizing them into mixed tactical sub-units (consisting of machine-guns, sub-machine guns, etc.)**





But is the autonomy of action of a detachment based only on its manpower? Manpower plays, of course, an important role but it is not decisive for the autonomy of action of a detachment. Manpower plays an important role in the composition of a squad, platoon, or company. But detachments, like battalions and other formations, should be organized in such manner as to be able to carry out the tasks assigned to them with the men and means at their disposal. A detachment need not be given more manpower in order to have autonomy of action. It can achieve it, even without increasing its manpower, if the command it depends on, provides it with additional means.

A detachment can achieve autonomy of action only when;

- it has enough manpower and firepower to carry out the task it is charged with;

- it has the special sub-units and detachments necessary for carrying out the combat action;

- it has autonomy of supply by its own means;

- it can move freely with its means on any terrain, is rapid in its movements and manoeuvring.

To solve this problem it is essential to define the tasks devolving on the units and detachments in mountainous terrain, especially the tasks that may be assigned to them in the specific conditions of mountainous terrain. In our topographic conditions, the tasks for our detachments may be defined as follows: